



Strategy and Implementation 2025

**SEPTA Youth
Advisory Council**

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Our Vision

The SEPTA Youth Advisory Council envisions a greater Philadelphia region where no young person struggles to afford or utilize SEPTA. We fight for a region where SEPTA is the primary transportation method linking the talented young people of Southeastern Pennsylvania to the thousands of opportunities our region has to offer. We work to achieve our vision through education, outreach, and advocacy.

Statements from the Executive Committee

We have had a wonderfully successful year and are proud of the accomplishments of our organization. The achievements were many, but we hope they will serve only as a foundation on which we will further expand our operation.

We want to take a minute to recognize the hard work of our many members this year. Getting the YAC back on track has not been easy and has required hours of work. Despite bleak outlook on transit funding, our members continue to come to meetings with a consistent level of excitement and passion. We cannot thank them enough. They are the ones who have made this all possible. We as an Executive Committee could not ask for a better team.

The Executive Committee is ready to continue the fight in 2025. We are ready to see UPASS adopted at more universities. We are ready to educate our peers on the many exciting changes coming to SEPTA. There are stories to tell and voices to amplify. There is talent that needs to be nurtured. We are ready to be a mouthpiece for our constituents. We are ready to step into our role as the premiere advocacy organization for young people in transit.

The Executive Committee



Member at Large
Christian Szalinski



Vice Chair
Bradley Garber



Executive Chair
Thomas Pyle



Secretary
Jason Berkheimer



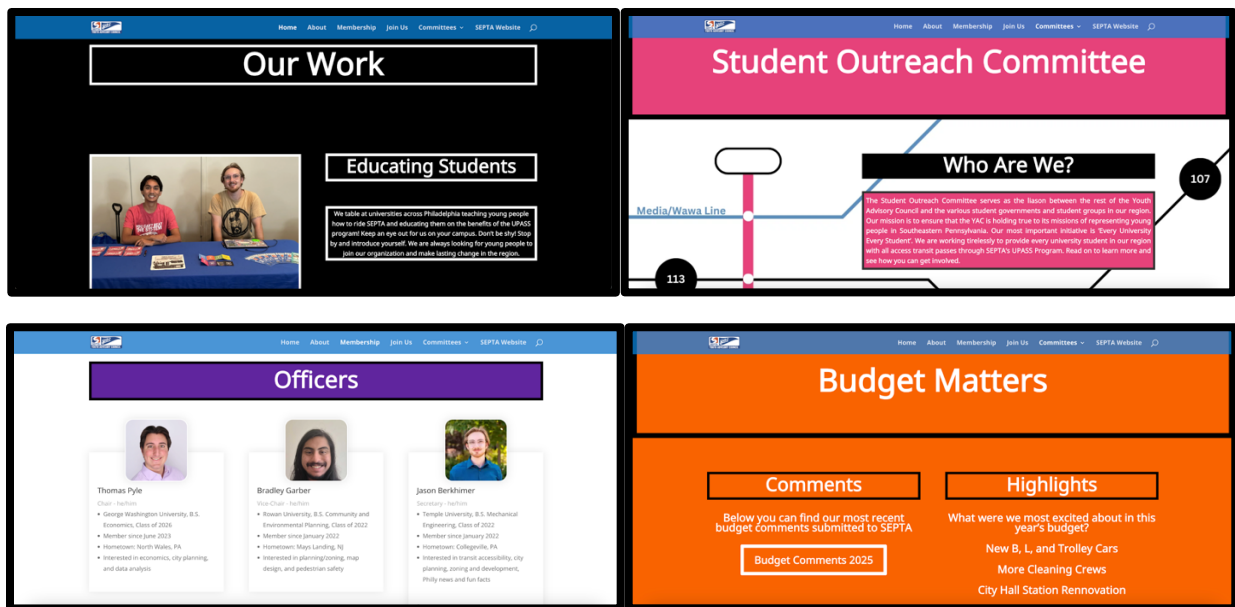
Member at Large
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Looking Back

The SEPTA Youth Advisory Council had multiple accomplishments of significance in the year 2024. These went above and beyond the scope of the goals laid out in the 2024 Strategy and Implementation document. The YAC is excited and hopes to keep this momentum going in 2025. Before the goals of this new year are outlined though, we feel it is important to provide summaries for each of these major accomplishments to establish context for what is going to be achieved in 2025.

Website Redesign

The YAC spent countless hours redesigning and updating its website. The Council recognizes that the website is often the first way young people find out and learn about the organization. Having a website that accurately reflects the state of the organization was therefore a crucial step forward. The updated color theme matches with SEPTA Metro perfectly and will be relevant for years to come. They make our website much more accessible to those with visual impairments looking to learn about the YAC. The redesign includes multiple new features as well. The most important is that the website now accepts applications directly rather than redirecting to a google form. This makes the application process streamlined and seamless for prospective members and has been followed by higher-than-normal application counts.



SEPTA YAC Updated Website



SEPTA YAC Handbook

The YAC has begun drafting an official handbook. The 2024 Strategy and Implementation document focused on a significant challenge to the organization which was the loss of institutional knowledge from members aging out. The executive committee took it upon itself to rectify this problem for future generations. This handbook works in tandem with the bylaws to explicitly outline all of our administrative duties, policies, and financial matters. Much research is necessary to complete the Handbook. As mentioned previously, many capabilities the organization once had have been lost. The Executive Committee is working tirelessly to ensure that anyone can run the organization for years to come.



SEPTA YAC Handbook

Formation of Committees

2024 saw the return of committees to the YAC. Previously, work was disorganized and given out recklessly. That process was done away with this year. The bylaws were amended to allow for the creation and dissolution of committees made up of all members of the council. This year, four committees were formed. Each plays an integral role in the operations of the Youth Advisory Council and will thus be allowed to stand for the remainder of 2025 as well. These committees are required to submit committee reports once a month throughout the year where they detail the work they are doing in detail to be presented to the Executive Committee. The purpose of the committees was to accomplish the goals laid out in the 2024 Strategy and Implementation



Government Affairs Committee

The Government Affairs committee works to communicate with legislators from across the state while completing legislative research on bills moving through city, state, and federal government. Next year, the committee will shift its focus to researching the affects of legislation that is both passed and voted down and the effects they would or could have had on access to transit.

- **Contacted and received feedback from dozens of state reps and senators**
- **Drafted resolution for use by Haverford Student Council (SC) to bring to administration**

Student Outreach Committee

The Student Outreach Committee connects with student governments across Philadelphia. This committee helps with advocacy on campus, specifically for the SEPTA UPASS program. It was this committee that first made contact with Bryn Mawr and connected the SEPTA Key Advantage team to the college's administration. This committee continues to organize campus appearances in conjunction with the SEPTA team.

- **Coordinated tabling's at two universities: Temple and Drexel**
 - **Letters sent to SEPA universities to adopt UPASS**

Online Outreach Committee

The Online Outreach Committee handles the social media presence of the YAC. This committee is crucial to achieving the notoriety the YAC needs to continue seeing new applications. This committee was a key driver in our twitter followers surpassing the goal set in the 2024 Strategy and Implementation. Further, this committee provides wonderful graphic design experience that carries over into everything that the Council does.

- **Grew follower count on twitter to 800+ followers**
- **Facilitated most successful application season in years (9 applicants)**

SEPTA Affairs Committee

This committee handles communication with SEPTA and is the primary facilitator of the budget comments. Budget comments remain the YAC's most important function and this committee ensures that every member comments and packages that feedback up to be shared with the Authority. A copy of this year's budget comments can be found on the newly updated website on the SEPTA Affairs Committee page.

- **Successfully compiled budget comments for submission to SEPTA**
- **Student rider guide for college students learning about SEPTA**

Application Reform

The Youth Advisory Council has reformed its application process. Previously, applications were accepted on a rolling basis. This year, the YAC chose an application window of approximately two months. There were 9 applications submitted to replace the two members of the SEPTA Youth Advisory Council that aged out. This has been an incredibly successful round of applications that has forced the YAC to consider expanding headcount from 16 to 18. Going forward, we may continue to grow our headcount to 20. Additional help will allow us to complete our goals easier and ease the workload our members.



The YAC Meets with Leslie Richards for an annual update

Looking Forward

The YAC will continue to edge out a larger and larger role in the transit community. The accomplishments of this year have given the organization momentum and experience that will facilitate an even more active year in 2025. The goals we set for the year 2025 will be split between committee specific goals and then organization wide goals. These will be outlined in this document and will include concrete metrics by which the success of the organization can be measured.

Register for Non-Profit Status

The YAC does not currently have official nonprofit determination by the IRS. Obtaining official determination would grant access to many new tools offered by philanthropic organizations and businesses. The process for applying is straightforward. Official determination as a 501(3)(c) will require amendments to the organization's bylaws ensuring that funds raised in the pursuit of the mission are not misused. Further, to achieve this status, the organization cannot devote a significant amount of its resources towards lobbying. Currently, the government affairs committee toes the line on lobbying work. The focus of this committee will be shifted towards researching the policies that are enacted as well as what government policies would help most with making SEPTA accessible to young people.

To achieve this goal the YAC will submit its application early on in 2025 or in the last months of 2024. This will allow the search for grants and benefits to kick off as soon as 2025 starts. We are confident our organization will qualify as we have a strong educational track record that we are only going to improve on as time goes on.

If we are unable to qualify for 501(c)(3) status we will need to reevaluate sources of funding. In the past, the YAC was able to secure grant opportunities despite not having official determination from the IRS. It is important to the YAC that we not receive funding from SEPTA as we know better than most of the dire financial strain the Authority is under. We are proud to volunteer for SEPTA. We hope to raise \$250-\$500 this year to support tabling and general operations this year.

Recovering Finances

The YAC has not had access to the bank account associated with our organization since covid. To apply for grant funding to expand our operations, we will need access to the account and the assets it contains. We will work with past members of the YAC, specifically Will Herzog, to transfer access to our current Executive Committee. We will then establish a protocol for

future transfers of the account to prevent loss of the asset again in the future. Any funds that remain in the account will go towards supporting our operations on college campuses in the coming year.

In addition to recovering access to the YAC bank account, the organization must also prepare financial statements. This is a necessary step in bringing the YAC into compliance with government regulation. The YAC will also establish protocol for document retention. This will entail organizing and assessing past financial statements as well as saving new financial documents in an organized fashion.

Apply for Grant Funding

There are many available grants and programs available to charitable organizations. If the YAC hopes to scale its educational and outreach efforts, it will need to significantly expand its presence on college campuses. To do this, materials will need to be purchased. Further, the YAC would be more efficient with better technology. Currently the organization uses WordPress to platform the website. The hosting service is rather unintuitive and therefore prevents the organization from fully utilizing the full potential of its online presence. With grant funding, the YAC could move to a better more intuitive platform. Beyond this, the YAC could gain access to better meeting software through Google for Nonprofits. This would allow for the YAC to access unlimited meetings with Google Meets, domain emails, and large online storage.

Coordinate with Local Advocacy Groups

Local advocacy groups are important. Working together allows us to cover each other's blind spots and makes us all stronger. For the first time in 2024, the YAC appointed a liaison to Transit Forward Philly. To keep us updated and educated on the issues local advocates are fighting for, we will be looking to appoint more liaison's to fellow groups in 2025. Most importantly, we want to appoint a liaison to the Advisory Committee. Our fellow advisory council also advocates for SEPTA and collaborating more often will amplify our voices when giving feedback to SEPTA and when speaking with local leaders and elected officials.

Committee Projects

Each of the standing committees of the Youth Advisory Council will lay out tangible long term, concrete goals and strategies with which to meet them. These goals are meant to be simultaneously challenging and exciting. They will push our members to innovate and collaborate on a completely new level. These projects will each come with a series of tangible goals that we will use as key performance indicators when evaluating our progress at the end of the year.

SEPTA Affairs

1. Start a speaker series focused on a core policy position that we would like to advocate for at SEPTA. We will have at least 6 speakers share their SEPTA experience this year.
2. Have increased collaboration with other advocacy groups, and visits to/meetings with relevant SEPTA departments.

Why?

While most YAC initiatives, such as advocating for Key Advantage, are driven by our own members, it is also important to work with other groups, and SEPTA themselves, to ensure our voices are heard. Other coalitions, including 5th Square and Transit Forward Philly, share the same views as us, and have extensive knowledge of the political process of making positive change. Inviting others more involved with improving SEPTA, to speak with us on a forum which we could share through our social media, would not only improve our relationships with the above groups, but also provide our audience of young people with a better understanding of the issues we face.

How?

Generally, when the YAC meets with guests, we typically have conversations just between ourselves, but if we invite a particular speaker to a meeting, we could set up a more structured, recorded Q&A or speech session, which could then be uploaded to our social media, in a longer-form video.

When?

By assigning liaisons to both SEPTA and other advocacy groups, where we can show a presence at routine meetings, we can hopefully start reaching out to particular speakers who might be interested in meeting with us throughout the winter.

Obstacles?

Since most people we would be meeting with have many other commitments or full-time jobs, scheduling meeting times can be complicated. Also, while many professionals we meet with have opinions on how to improve SEPTA, not all of them may be comfortable with speaking on camera or on the record.

Student Outreach

1. Student Outreach will be tabling at universities independently. We hope to speak with 100 students in total.
2. Student Outreach will continue contacting Student Government Associations (SGA's) and advocating UPASS. We will bring a UPASS resolution to Haverford in 2025.

Why?

Tabling allows the YAC to hear from those that it actually represents. The YAC understands that its 18 members may not be entirely representative of the youth demographic in SEPTA and tabling can remedy that situation. The tabling will not only broaden our knowledge of the issues that matter to young people, but will allow us to share what we know with others. The YAC will focus on safety tips, system explanations, and future plans of SEPTA. Additionally, the YAC will collect data on the student rider experience to better inform policy endorsements in the future.

How?

To table, the Student Outreach Committee will first need adequate funding to purchase tabling equipment. This will include a YAC table cloth, table weights, pamphlets, and SEPTA Merch. These items will help to clearly designate our table, share information easily, and keep an interactive experience for the young people that the committee hopes to reach.

When?

The YAC has already participated in two tabling's in 2024. However, in 2025 as soon as we can gain access to grant funds, we can move swiftly on tabling. We estimate we can gather enough resources to ramp up tabling in the spring semester of 2025.

Obstacles?

There are multiple potential obstacles that will need to be worked out in order for the YAC to fully utilize this method of outreach. First, permission will be needed to be on these college campuses. Second, availability is difficult to coordinate as many YAC members are university students and some have full time jobs. Finally, if funding is not obtained, the YAC will need to obtain funding either from its own members or SEPTA. Currently the YAC does not receive funding from SEPTA.

Online Outreach

1. Online Outreach will author student transit stories to report on how students use their UPASS. We will publish a report containing stories from 5 students.
2. Online Outreach will reach 1000 followers on Twitter, 800 on Instagram, and our new TikTok will reach 100 followers this year.

Why?

The YAC understands the importance of creating a strong presence online and on social media to gain a wider audience. Online engagement and social media will ensure the YAC can reach riders and students across Southeastern Pennsylvania. The YAC hopes that maintaining a strong online presence will open communication and engagement with our audience. We want to create an way to post YAC and SEPTA news, announcements, updates and ridership material.

How?

Sharing student transit stories will be the YAC latest online outreach project. The project will include interviewing and creating profiles for students who use UPASS to showcase how they travel throughout Southeastern Pennsylvania using SEPTA services. Secondly, the YAC aims to gain a larger following across all our social media platforms. We would like to set a goal of reaching a follower count of 1000+ on both Twitter and Instagram. As for TikTok, the YAC plans on creating an account to further engage with a student and youth audience. Lastly, the YAC will continue to create and utilize graphic designs for a more dynamic online presence.

When?

In order to maintain a steady online presence, the YAC will aim to post Instagram stories at least once a week. We will further attempt to post nearly daily on twitter. Tik Toks will be our most infrequent type of post as we will need to learn how to make them and then compile best practices for coordinating their production often.

Obstacles?

One obstacle that stands in the way of regular posting is coordinating access to the various accounts of the YAC. With our many accounts, we will need to create a protocol for assigning accounts to members weekly. Additionally, having enough to post about is also an obstacle to our plan. The YAC is an organization that goes through both busy times and quieter times. Having new content to post may pose a significant challenge as the year goes on.

Government Affairs

1. Government Affairs will partner with Haverford to adopt a resolution urging administration to adopt UPASS.
2. Government Affairs will research and report on at least 3 pieces of legislation related to mass transit in the Pennsylvania State Assembly

Why?

The UPASS program is the best way to encourage students to ride public transit and the program has been popular at the schools where it has been implemented. We believe Haverford is the most likely candidate to adopt the program, given the school's similarities to Swarthmore and Bryn Mawr. In addition to partnering with local university SGA's, educating our peers is a priority of this committee. Education does not stop at system and safety; it includes educating our young people on the legislation at the state level that could make their lives better. The committee will continue to provide insights into legislation that would improve SEPTA for all riders.

How?

We are already in contact with Haverford and their student government. We attempted to have a UPASS proposal presented at their Fall Plenary this year but were unsuccessful. We will attempt again in the spring. This will entail a grassroots campaign to gather the signatures needed for the resolution to be presented to the students in the spring.

Individual members of the committee will also be assigned one piece of legislation to research and report back on. This will require teaching our committee members how to research legislation and where to find helpful and reliable information online.

When?

We will reconnect with the Haverford student government at the beginning of their second semester so we will be ready for their Spring Plenary. Legislative research will begin once the new General Assembly session starts in the spring.

Obstacles?

The largest obstacle to Haverford's plenary resolution will be convincing students to sign on to a resolution that could result in tuition increases. This and the gathering of signatures poses by far the greatest challenge to this committee in the coming year. If unsuccessful we will reevaluate our strategy over the summer. Additionally finding the tools for hosting a table at Haverford College will be a step that needs to be taken.